

Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4876
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 1842

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IT
SUBJECT: LOMBARDY REGIONAL PRESIDENT GOLFARI EXPLAINS SEVESO TO
CONSULAR CORPS

1. SUMMARY. LOMBARDY REGION PRESIDENT GOLFARI HELD MEETING AUGUST 19 FOR CONSULS IN MILAN TO CORRECT DISTORTIONS ON EXTENT OF SEVESO CONTAMINATION AND DISSEMINATE OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION ON INCIDENT. HE SAID MONTH OF OCTOBER WOULD BE DEDICATED TO EXPERIMENTS ON HOW BEST TO DECONTAMINATE AFFECTED AREA, WITH VIEW TO SAVING HOUSES AND OTHER STRUCTURES TO EXTENT POSSIBLE. HE ASKED COUNTRIES REPRESENTED TO FACILITATE OFFERS OF EXPERT HELP FOR DECONTAMINATION, WHICH REGION WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER FOR POSSIBLE USE. TWO COMPANIES--ONE SWISS AND ONE ENGLISH--HAVE ALREADY OFFERED SUCH HELP AND CONTRACTS WITH THEM WERE TO BE SIGNED TODAY. END SUMMARY.

1. LOMBARDY REGIONAL PRESIDENT CESARE GOLFARI (DC) AUGUST 19 GAVE LUCID EXPLANATION OF SEVESO PROBLEM TO SOME 19 CONSULAR REPRESENTATIVES IN MILAN AT LOMBARDY REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS. (MILAN HAS 27 CONSULATES STAFFED WITH RESIDENT FOREIGN DIPLOMATS PLUS ANOTHER 44 HONORARY CONSULS.) TELEVISION CREWS FILMED PARTICIPANTS BEFORE GOLFARI BEGAN BUT MEETING ITSELF WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIVATE. GOLFARI'S ONE HOUR PRESENTATION WAS COHERENT

AND WELL PREPARED. HE USED MAPS AND WAS BACKED UP BY TWO ADVISORS.

2. GOLFARI SAID MAIN PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO CORRECT DISTORTIONS CONCERNING SEVESO INCIDENT BEING DISSEMINATED IN SOME FOREIGN COUNTRIES. THIS MISINFORMATION HAS LED SOME TO BELIEVE THAT CITY OF MILAN OR EVEN ALL OF LOMBARDY HAS BEEN HIT BY POISONED CLOUD. ONLY YESTERDAY SOMEONE FROM ARGENTINA CALLED TO ASK WHETHER IT WAS SAFE TO COME TO ITALY. THESE MISCONCEPTIONS HAVE RESULTED IN SOME ITALIAN EXPORTS HAVING BEEN BLOCKED AT BORDER AND, MORE GENERALLY, IN WRONG IMPRESSION HAVING BEEN GIVEN OF EXTENT OF DAMAGE. SOME COUNTRIES HAVE EVEN SUGGESTED THAT CERTIFICATE OF HEALTH (PASSAPORTO SANITARIO) BE AFFIXED TO ITALIAN EXPORTS TO INSURE THEY ARE NOT FROM CONTAMINATED ZONE.

3. FACT IS, SAID GOLFARI, THAT CONTAMINATED PART OF LOMBARDY EXTREMELY SMALL AND NUMBER OF PERSONS AFFECTED MINIMAL. ZONE A, WORST HIT, COMPRISES 115 HECTARES AND ZONE B, WHERE CONTAMINATION MUCH LOWER AND WHICH HAS NOT BE EVACUATED, 205 HECTARES. OUT OF LOMBARDY POPULATION OF 9 MILLION, FIVE THOUSAND LIVE IN ZONES A AND B, OF WHICH ONLY 730 HAVE BEEN EVACUATED.

4. GOLFARI CITED MORE NUMBERS TO SHOW MINIMAL EFFECT ON ITALIAN COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. IN ALL OF LOMBARDY, HE SAID, THERE ARE 200,000 SMALL BUSINESSES (FEWER THAN 25 EMPLOYEES). IN BRIANZA, TRADITIONAL NAME FOR AREA WHICH INCLUDES ZONES A AND B AND WHICH IS OFTEN LOOSELY USED TO SIGNIFY THE CONTAMINATED AREA, NUMBER OF SMALL BUSINESSES IS 50,000. ZONE A, HOWEVER, COMPRISES ONLY 46 SMALL BUSINESSES PLUS 2 INDUSTRIES, ICMESA ITSELF AND ONE FABRIC MANUFACTURER (70 EMPLOYEES). GOLFARI PASSED OUT LIST OF 37 OF ZONE A BUSINESSES, ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN EVACUATED, PLUS ANOTHER 70 FROM ZONE B, WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN. GOLFARI ALSO CITED HEALTH STATISTICS REFLECTING SITUATION AS OF 1800 HOURS AUGUST 18. NUMBER OF PERSONS HOSPITALIZED IS 13. BLOOD SAMPLES EXAMINED FOR DIOXIN TRACES 6,886. DOCTORS HAVE HANDLED 1,021 DERMATOLOGICAL

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VISITS, 63 GENERAL MEDICAL VISITS, AND 340 OBSTETRIC AND 60 GYNECOLOGICAL VISITS, AND HAVE HELD 120 OTHER

CONSULTATIONS WITH PERSONS FROM AREA.

5. GERMAN CONSUL SAID HIS COUNTRY HAS BANNED IMPORTS FROM ALL FOUR COMMUNITIES WHOSE NAMES HAVE BEEN MENTIONED IN CONNECTION WITH POISONED CLOUD IN ABSENCE

OF MORE PRECISE INDICATION OF WHICH PARTS OF AREA
AFFECTED AND WHICH NOT. HE SAID HE ASKED REGION
FOR MAP GIVING THIS INFORMATION BUT WAS REFUSED.
GOLFARI PROMISED HIM SUCH A MAP. FRENCH CONSUL RAISED
POINT THAT THERE WAS NOT CONTROL OF SEVESO SITUATION
FROM JULY 10 TO 21. DURING THIS PERIOD,
TOURISTS AND OTHERS DROVE THROUGH AREA AND GOODS
CAME OUT. GOLFARI AGREED TO TAKE MEASURES TO LET
ANYONE WHO HAD BEEN IN AREA KNOW THAT HE OR SHE SHOULD
SUBMIT TO SAME MEDICAL CHECKS UNDERGONE BY LOCAL
INHABITANTS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT DANGER OF CON-
TAMINATION FROM DRIVE THROUGH AREA WAS MINIMAL SINCE
DIOXIN DAMAGES HUMANS ONLY AFTER BEING BREATHED OR
EATEN. AS FOR CONTAMINATION OF EXPORTS, PARTICULARLY
VEGETABLES, HE EXPLAINED THAT AFFECTED ZONES ARE NOT
AGRICULTURAL BUT INDUSTRIAL AREA AND THAT FRUITS
AND VEGETABLES GROWN THERE ARE FOR HOME CONSUMPTION.

6. GOLFARI'S SECOND MAJOR POINT CONCERNED DECONTRAM-
INATION MEASURES REGION PLANNED TO TAKE. THERE IS
STILL NO AGREEMENT, HE SAID, ON EXACTLY HOW TO INTER-
VENE. ROME-BASED COMMISSION OF EXPERTS AND
TECHNICIANS HAS MADE PROPOSALS WHICH REGIONAL
COMMISSION SET UP FOR PURPOSE MUST NOW CONSIDER.
COMMISSION WILL DO THIS AUGUST 24. FOR MOMENT,
TWO BROAD PHASES ARE FORESEEN. DURING FIRST PHASE,
AND BEGINNING IMMEDIATELY, ALL VEGETATION IN ZONE
A WILL BE BURNED IN SPECIAL INCINERATOR NEAR ICMESA
PLANT AT TEMPERATURE EXCEEDING 800 DEGREES IN ORDER TO
DESTROY DIOXIN. AT SAME TIME EXPERIMENTS WILL BE
MADE ON HOW BEST TO DECONTAMINATE AREA WITH VIEW TO
SAVING AS MUCH OF IT AS POSSIBLE FROM DESTRUCTION.
REGION, SAID GOLFARI, IS ASKING FOR ASSISTANCE
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FROM EXPERTS ALL OVER WORLD ON HOW TO ATTACK DIOXIN.
MEETING WITH CONSULS, HE SAID, WAS PART OF THAT
APPEAL. GOLFARI PROMISED THAT REGIONAL GOVERNMENT
WOULD GIVE RIGOROUS CONSIDERATION TO ANY OFFER MADE.
TWO COMPANIES--ONE BRITISH AND ONE SWISS--HAVE ALREADY
PROPOSED DECONTAMINATION SCHEMES, AND CONTRACTS BETWEEN
THEM AND REGIONA WOULD BE SIGNED TODAY. THESE COMPANIES'
PROPOSALS--AND THOSE OF ANY OTHERS WHO COME FORWARD--
WILL BE PUT INTO PRACTICE ON EXPERIMENTAL BASIS
BEGINNING MID-OCTOBER, PROCESS WHICH SHOULD CONSUME
REST OF MONTH.

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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7. SECOND PHASE, SAID GOLFARI, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE ROUGHLY IN NOVEMBER, WILL BE TO APPLY TO AFFECTED AREA METHODS REGIONAL COMMISSION CHOSSES AS APPROPRIATE FROM AMONG THOSE PUT FORWARD. IF NO DECONTAMINATION METHODS ARE FOUND TO BE EFFECTIVE, REGION WILL CONSIDER DESTRUCTION OF ALL OR PART OF AFFECTED ZONES.

8. GOLFARI EXPLAINED AS ASIDE THAT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, BESIDES SETTING UP TECHNICAL-SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION THAT MADE DECONTRAMINATION PROPOSAL, HAS TAKEN TWO OTHER INITIATIVES REGARDING SEVESO. FIRST WAS SPECIAL LAW FOR SEVESO PUTTING ASIDE 40 BILLION LIRE FOR REGION TO DISTRIBUTE AS AID. SECOND WAS TO SET UP MINISTERIAL COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE CULPABILITY OF ICMESA. HE ADDED THAT THERE IS "PERFECT UNDERSTANDING" BETWEEN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AS WELL AS BETWEEN REGION AND MUNICIPALITIES.

9. GOLFARI MADE NO MENTION OF AMERICAN EXPERTS DR. PHILIP KEARNEY AND DR. ALAN POLAND OR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOLUTION OF PROBLEM.

10. COMMENT. GOLFARI GAVE FIRST-CLASS PRESENTATION WHICH MIGHT BETTER HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AT ITALIAN PRESS AND PUBLIC AS WELL AS HIS OWN COLLEAGUES. ASSESSORE FOR HEALTH VITTORIO RIVOLTA, FOR EXAMPLE, DID LITTLE
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TO COMMUNICATE PROPER PERSPECTIVE ON SEVESO WHEN HE TOLD CORRIERE DELLA SERA INTERVIEWER THAT HE SAW NOTHING WRONG WITH DESCRIPTION OF SEVESO AS "OUR LITTLE HIROSHIMA." (CORRIERE DELLA SERA, JULY 5). THAT PAPER ITSELF HAS AT TIMES BEEN EQUALLY MELODRAMATIC AND MISLEADING. FRONT PAGE CORRIERE EDITORIAL OF JULY 12 CALLED SEVESO "GRAVEST DISASTER OF OUR TIME." BOT ITALIAN PRESS AND ITALIAN AUTHORITIES, THEREFORE, SHARE BLAME FOR DISTORTED REPORTING OF INCIDENT AND OVER-REACTIONS THERETO.

11. GOLFARI'S APPEAL FOR SUGGESTIONS OF FOREIGN DECONTAMINATION EXPERTS FOLLOWS UPON REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT PROPOSALS OF ROME-BASED TECHNICAL-SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION WHICH CALL FOR DESTRUCTION OF STRUCTURES IN ZONE A. PLEDGE OF REGIONAL ASSESSORE RIVOLTA (DC) TO SEVESO AREA RESIDENTS TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SAVE THEIR HOMES HAS FRANKLY POLITICAL RING. WHETHER REGION SIMPLY GOING THROUGH MOTIONS TO DEMONSTRATE TO ELECTROATE THAT THEY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE OR WHETHER THEY HAVE MORE SERIOUS PURPOSE IN MIND, FACT IS THAT MUCH TIME AND MONEY MAY NOW BE SPENT ON SAVING SMALL NUMBER OF HOUSES AND OTHER STRUCTURES WHOSE MONEY VALUE IS SMALL.

12. IN LIGHT OF INITIAL PUBLIC BUCK-PASSING BETWEEN REGION AND ROME AND PRESENT PUBLIC RELUCTANCE OF REGION TO ACCEPT ROME COMMISSION'S DECONTAMINATION PROPOSALS, GOLFARI'S CLAIMS OF PERFECTION IN ROM-REGIONAL RELATIONSHIP HAVE HOLLOW RING.
END COMMENT. WRIGHT

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